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Identical letters dated 27 August 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fifty-fourth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018) (S/2018/777).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regrets that the authors of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) continue to take a negative, politicized and hostile approach to the Syrian Arab Republic and its institutions. It also regrets that, in the report under consideration, the authors continue to ignore its concerns and the questions that it posed to the relevant Secretariat officials and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in its responses to the fifty-first, fifty-second and fifty-third reports, as well as to previous reports. The relevant reports of the Secretary-General would have been more credible and professional if the authors had provided a reasonable response to those questions.

As was the case with previous reports, the current report utterly fails to convey the true humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and what the Syrian people need to alleviate their suffering and increase their resilience. Indeed, the reports are still being used to fragment international efforts, which should instead be focused on combating terrorism in Syria and halting the financing of terrorism, so that Syrians can live in safety and dignity and prosper.

The Syrian Government reiterates that if OCHA continues to take this politicized approach when preparing reports, it will harm the reputation and credibility of the United Nations and will further only the agendas of certain influential States in the Security Council and the Governments of other States in the region.

What follows is an overview of the position of the Syrian Government with respect to the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the report under consideration:

- Day by day, through the efforts of its institutions, with the support of its people and with international backing from the true friends of Syria, who believe in the principles of international law, the Syrian State has achieved important successes on the ground. It is making progress towards liberating Syrian

territory from the armed terrorist groups that have spread out among civilians, used them as human shields, exploited them, recruited their children and appropriated the humanitarian assistance that was intended for them. The achievements and momentous efforts of the national institutions of Syria have made it possible to support the Syrian people and ensure that United Nations assistance reaches them. The most recent such achievement was the liberation of areas in southern Syria from the armed terrorist groups deployed there, particularly Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. That development enhanced humanitarian access and facilitated the return of Syrian displaced persons and refugees to their homes in southern Syria as soon as they were liberated and cleared of the mines that had been planted by the terrorists. The United Nations should have praised these victories in the war on terrorism instead of criticizing those responsible for them.

- The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it rejects the use of the term "non-State armed opposition" with respect to armed terrorist groups that were deployed in the south, especially the terrorist ISIL and Nusrah Front organizations. The authors of the report used that term although they are aware that those organizations are on the Security Council sanctions lists pertaining to ISIL and Al-Qaida and associated entities and individuals. The Syrian Arab Republic also rejects the authors' characterization of the members of the White Helmets terrorist organization as "humanitarian actors", especially given that the Governments of certain Western States have used that organization to provide intelligence and logistical support to the ISIL and Nusrah Front terrorist organizations, and to manufacture incidents that are designed mislead the global public with regard to the alleged use of chemical weapons use in Syria. Moreover, the members of that organization have taken part directly, together with ISIL and Nusrah Front terrorists, in terrorist attacks against Syrians and Syrian State institutions. They are terrorist mercenaries whose mission ended with the elimination of the armed terrorist groups whose operations in Syria they had been ordered to support. The welcome extended by Israel and Jordan and certain Western States to those terrorists is proof of collusion between their Governments and those terrorist lackeys.

On the subject of designations, my Government is still surprised that, in their reports, the authors' have repeatedly failed to explicitly describe ISIL and the Nusrah Front and their affiliated and allied organizations, such as the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, as terrorists.

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that the use of such politicized designations by the authors clearly demonstrates that they are adhering to the political agendas of certain States. Moreover, it emphasizes that it would be tantamount to direct involvement in terrorism in Syria for any international organization or United Nations entity to cooperate with or support the White Helmets.

- The Syrian Arab Republic is astonished that the authors continue to inflate the importance of isolated incidents in certain parts of Syria and cite false information and statistics that are sourced largely from the armed terrorist groups themselves, particularly the members of the terrorist White Helmets, who are the primary source of information of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In that connection, my Government finds it deplorable that, despite the existence of a United Nations report on the matter, OHCHR has not yet informed the international community and United Nations Member States of the enormous destruction and abject humanitarian situation of civilians in the beleaguered city of Raqqah caused by the bombardment that was carried out by the so-called "international coalition" and its allied separatist militias. In the same vein, my Government wonders

whether the illegitimate coalition has conducted its operations in and around Raqqah and other cities in accordance with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Has OHCHR documented the crimes and massacres that have been committed in Syria by the illegitimate coalition, certain Western countries and Turkey? Has OHCHR documented the fact that members of the terrorist White Helmets have provided logistical support to ISIL and Nusrah Front terrorists in northern and southern Syria, and that they have fought beside the terrorists?

- The Syrian Arab Republic pays no heed to any terms used by the authors that were proven to be incorrect and politicized, including the redesignation of certain areas of Syria from "besieged" to "hard-to-reach", or some other designation. It also stresses that, pursuant to its constitutional obligations, the principles of international humanitarian law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 2253 (2015), and in accordance with humanitarian principles, the Syrian State responds to all Syrians on the basis of need, without discrimination, and continues to press ahead with its efforts to liberate all Syrian territory from terrorists and restore security and stability. Syria reaffirms that all areas liberated by the State from terrorists are now open areas and can be accessed by the United Nations and all other international organizations that truly and sincerely want to provide humanitarian support without discrimination, restrictions or conditions.

The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to correct the phrasing used by the authors: there are still parts of Syria that are under siege by armed terrorist groups, which are besieging civilians from inside cities and preventing them from leaving and denying them humanitarian assistance. This, for example, is currently the case in Idlib.

- The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Secretariat, the Security Council and Member States to press Governments and regional entities to put an immediate end to the illegal, unilateral coercive economic measures that they have imposed against Syria, its Government, people, institutions, private sector, businesspeople and service sectors, such as health, education and energy. The continued imposition of those illegal measures is the primary obstacle to securing the basic needs of the Syrian people, enhancing their humanitarian and living conditions, and putting in place the necessary conditions for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and the restoration of normal life. The authors' disregard of that critical issue clearly demonstrates that they are not fully committed to their mandate under the relevant Security Council resolutions, even though they fully recognize the extent to which those coercive measures affect the humanitarian situation and living conditions in Syria.

- In the report under consideration, the authors endeavour to blur mandates and competences by addressing the political situation and by using numerous politicized terms that are unrelated to their mandate or the topic of the report, which is supposed to concern the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- With respect to the authors' statement that the United Nations is not a party to the civilian evacuation agreements, the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that there are no civilian evacuation agreements. The United Nations and OCHA should have played an active and vital role in the conclusion of national reconciliation and de-escalation agreements. That is, they should have done so if they truly wished to expose the practices that have been employed against civilians by terrorists during their sieges of populated areas and if they wished to facilitate national reconciliation and regularize the status of armed

individuals, so as to spare Syrian lives, unless the aim of the United Nations is something else.

- The Syrian Arab Republic rejects the authors' clearly politicized approach and unequivocally denies the false allegations that they make with respect to operations conducted by the Syrian State to liberate the south from terrorists. It stresses that those operations were conducted with due regard for humanitarian considerations, in keeping with the concern of the Syrian State for the safety and security of civilians and its desire to ensure that they are protected. The State has provided safe corridors, shelters and basic humanitarian assistance, which paved the way for all subsequent deliveries of international humanitarian support to the south and facilitated the return of civilians to their homes once the areas in which they previously lived had been liberated from the terrorists. Those operations were conducted in keeping with the commitment of the Syrian State to implement Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, particularly resolution 2253 (2015).

- Although the authors try to sidestep the problem of low levels of international funding for Syria and the issue of donors who, contrary to the claims that they make at their review conferences, are tying their funding pledges to political conditions that are incompatible with the principles of humanitarian work, that does not negate the fact that the irresponsible behaviour of most donors is the real obstacle to strengthening the humanitarian response to the urgent, basic needs of Syrians, especially in those areas that have been liberated from terrorists and to which civilians are returning. Moreover, such politically motivated behaviour is an impediment to the ambitious plans for Syrian refugees to return to their homeland.

- The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that, over the past few months, the cooperation of the Syrian Government with United Nations and international organizations has reached unprecedented levels and helped to enhance the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Syrians in need. That cooperation, whether it be granting entry visas to officials of those organization or facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to certain areas of the country, is acknowledged by the authors in paragraph 25 of the report. That acknowledgement gives the lie to all accusations that the Syrian State is not facilitating humanitarian work. The Syrian Arab Republic also affirms that the figures on visas are incorrect, as the Syrian authorities have, without exception, processed all visa applications swiftly and in an even-handed manner.

- The Syrian Arab Republic finds it regrettable that the authors have fallen in line with the Governments of certain Western States by shamefully promoting cross-border aid. That method has been proven to be ineffective and does not ensure delivery of aid to civilian beneficiaries. In fact, it has become a method of providing indirect support to the terrorists, who are seizing cross-border aid, and is one of that factors that has enabled terrorists to continue their activities in Syria. Moreover, Syria regrets that, in paragraph 27 of the report, the authors again attempt to burnish the image of the Turkish authorities. They ignore the fact that the Turkish attacks against Afrin were what caused the displacement and humanitarian suffering of thousands of the city's residents.

Based on the above observations, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that those who are responsible for drafting Secretariat reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria must change their approach and strive to restore the confidence of the Syrian Government in the United Nations humanitarian system, and OCHA official should adhere to the principles of objectivity, transparency and impartiality.

The Syrian Arab Republic once again calls upon the Security Council to stop issuing these monthly reports, which many see as a waste of time, money and human resources, and replace them with quarterly reports that are written in a professional and credible manner.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative